

*Repealed*

P.114 STATEMENT OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE REGARDING THE INCIDENT  
OF SHELLING THE LADYBIRD AND OTHER BRITISH VESSELS.

DECEMBER 30, 1937

At the request of the Foreign Minister, Mr. Koki Hirota, the British Ambassador, Sir Robert Craigie, called upon the Foreign Minister on the 28th December, and was handed the Note of the Japanese Government with respect to the incidents of attacks made on the Ladybird and other British vessels.

Essential contents of the Japanese Note are as follows:

Monsieur L'Ambassadeur,

Concerning the incidents that occurred on the 12th instant in which Japanese forces attacked British men-of-war P.115 and merchant vessels by mistake, I had the honour to address a Note under date of the 14th instant tendering the profound apology of the Japanese Government, and stating that they have taken the necessary steps to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents, and that they would deal properly with those responsible and also defray the necessary compensation. Your Excellency sent a Note in reply under date of the 16th instant, in which Your Excellency, after describing the circumstances surrounding the incident, said (1) that the British Government were glad to receive my Note of the 14th mentioned above, (2) that they requested an assurance that the contents of my Note would apply to the attacks upon the British merchant vessels,

(3) that they took particular note of the point that those responsible would be suitably dealt with, and (4) that they desired to be informed that measures had been actually taken of a character which would put a definite stop to incidents of such a kind. I hastened to assure Your Excellency immediately in my Note of the 17th instant that what I had said in my Note of the 14th would, of course, apply to the British merchantvessels that had been attacked under such circumstances.

Upon the occurrence of the present incident the Japanese Government did their best to ascertain the facts of the case; but unfortunately, for various reasons, such as the wide separation of the units concerned which was consequent upon the progress of the military operations, and the inadequacy of the means of communication, the completion of the investigation P.116 has been delayed. We have now at length received a full report covering all aspect of the incidents, of which the principal points have already been explained by our military and naval authorities to members of Your Excellency's Embassy. As Your Excellency must have gathered from this report, the present incidents were, in each case, due to the fact that our armed forces concerned had taken it for granted that under the circumstances which prevailed at the time all foreign warships and vessels had sought refuge from the theatres of battle and from their vicinity, and that there could be no other vessels left in those localities than those of an enemy character, and also to the fact that just then, owing to the



thick fog or haze, visibility was extremely poor: and there is no room for doubt as to the fact that our forces never attacked those vessels intentionally, knowing them to be of British nationality. This is clearly apparent in the light of the one fact alone that our naval air squadrons and military units ceased firing the instant they discovered the nationality of the ships, and our soldiers gave assistance in taking care of the dead and wounded of the "Ladybird".

As regards the assertion advanced to the effect that our military commander concerned spoke of his having received an order to fire upon all vessels on the Yangtze, the Japanese Government have, with special concern, investigated the matter, P.117 and it has been established that the alleged order applied only to all vessels used for military purposes by the enemy, and it was never meant to apply to the vessels of third Powers.

As regards the matters of an apology on behalf of the Japanese Government and compensation, it is only necessary to reaffirm what I have said in my previous Note. As for the treatment of those responsible, although it has been established that the incidents were entirely due to a mistake, the Japanese Government, in order to insure against all possibility of similar mistakes, have dealt properly with those responsible on the ground that they failed to take the fullest measures of precaution.

Finally, as regards the guarantee for the future, the Army and the Navy issued, immediately after the incidents,

strict orders to the forces to guard against a repetition of such mistake by exercising the greatest caution in every area where vessels of Great Britain and other third powers are found. Also, both the military, naval and diplomatic authorities on the spot have, in view of the present untoward incidents, renewed the rigid instructions that had been repeatedly given to safeguard life and property in the case of third powers. The Japanese Government are studying, and expect to carry out, every possible means of realizing the above aims. For instance, they intend to ascertain, in still closer cooperation with the British authorities, the whereabouts of British nationals and interests, and to communicate intelligence thereof to the authorities on the spot, and also to subordinate units, and they have taken steps to improve the facilities of communication for the speedy and effective transmission of orders,

The Japanese Government have taken all these measures enumerated above in their sincere desire to render more effective and certain the guarantee for the rights and interests of Great Britain and other third Powers, and I earnestly hope that this will be appreciated by the British Government.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.



C E R T I F I C A T E

Statement of Source and Authenticity

I, ODO, Nagaharu, Assistant Chief of the Archives Section,  
Japanese Foreign Office, hereby certify that the document hereto  
attached in English consisting of 4 pages and entitled "State-  
ment of the Foreign Office Regarding the Incident of Shelling the  
Ladybird And British Vessels, December 30, 1937" is an exact and  
true copy of an official trans. of the Japanese Foreign Office.

Certified at Tokyo,  
on this 13th day of <sup>January</sup> 1947.

(Signed) Nagaharu Odo  
Signature of Official

Witness: (Signed) H. Ishida

*Rejected*

「レディバード」號其他英國船政變  
事件ニ關スル外務省發表(十二月三十日)

昭和十二年十二月二十八日廣田外務大臣ハ在本會「クレイギー」英國大使ノ來訪ヲ求メ「レディバード」號其他英國船政變事件ニ關スル左記要旨ノ回答ヲ手書ナリ

本月十二日滿洲及南京方面ニ於テ帝國軍力認ツテ貴國軍艦及商船ヲ攻撃シタル事件ニ關シテハ是ニ本月十四日附掛シテ以テ帝國政府ノ深慮ナル點點ヲ表明スルト共ニ同様事件再發防止ノ爲直ニ必要ナル措置ヲ執リタル旨及責任者ニ對シ適當ナル賠償ヲ執ルヘク又必要ナル賠償ヲ行フヘキ旨申渡メタルニ對シ閣下ヨリ本月十六日附書ヲ以テ本事件ノ事情ヲ詳細ニラレタル後(前記)月十四日附掛シテ受領シタルハ英國政府ノ欣幸トスル所ナル旨(英國政府ハ右附掛申送メノ次第ハ英國商船ニ對スル攻撃ニ付テハ同様適用セラルヘシトノ條約ヲ求ムル旨(英國政府ニ於テハ責任者カ適當ニ賠償セラルヘシトノ點點ニ重復スル旨並ニ英國政府

(/)





ニ攻襲ヲ中止ナル事實、陸軍部既カ「レティバード」號死傷者ノ處置ニ  
 對シ補助ヲ與ヘタル事實等ニヨリテ、前記タルル處ト信ス。  
 代又「レティバード」號等ノ死傷ニ關シ、陸軍部既長カ子江上ニ  
 於ケル一切ノ船舶ニ對シ射撃スヘシトノ命令ヲ發ケ居レル旨述ヘタリト  
 ノ主張ハ帝國政府ニ於テ既ニ重大ナル關心ヲ以テ、突如ニ力メタル所ナル  
 カ左ハ斷ノ軍用ニ在リ居ル一切ノ船舶ノ射撃ニシテ、法シテ第三國船舶ヲ  
 射撃スヘシトノ命令ニアラサリシコト、判斷セリ本事件ニ關スル帝國政  
 府ノ態度並ニ提議ノ存否ニ付テハ既ニ前記拙意中ニ表明シタル所ヲ以テ  
 詳クヘカ處、本事件存否ノ事實ニ關シテハ前述ノ通り本事件ハ全ク自  
 二出テタルコト與リヤリト雖モ十分ノ注意ヲ拂フ點ニ於テ餘クル所アリ  
 タルノ理由ニヨリ關係者ニ對シ夫々必要ナル措置ヲ行ヒ此ノ標準點ノ存  
 無キ期シタル次第ナリ。  
 次二十六日附貴國末尾今後ノ低降ニ關シテハ帝國陸海軍ニ於テハ本事件  
 發生ニ英國其他第三國船舶ノ存在スル點ニ於テハ最大ノ注意ヲ以テ經



對ニ今回ノ如キ避難ヲ繰返サルル様努ムヘキ旨嚴ニ命令シタル外從來屢  
 屢出先陸海軍並ニ外務官憲ニ對シ訓令濟ナルモ更ニ今回ノ不祥事件ニモ  
 僅ニ英國其他第三國人ノ生命財產ニ對シ攻撃ヲ加ヘサル様一層切實周到  
 ナル注意ヲ加フヘキ旨重キテ嚴命ヲ發セル次第ナリ而シテ是等ノ目的ノ  
 達成ヲ一層有效ナラシムヘキ一切ノ手段ニ關シテモ慎重ナル考究ヲ重キ  
 是カ實行ヲ期シ居ル次第ニシテ即チ貴國民留民及棉倉ノ所在等ニ關シテ  
 ハ更ニ貴方ト十分連絡調査ノ上臨時之ヲ出先ニ通報シ下級部隊ニ至ル迄  
 徹底ヲシメシフトヲ期シ其通信方法ニ付テハ特ニ確實迅速ヲ期スル様考  
 慮ヲ加ヘタル次第ナリ、以上述ヘタル如ク帝國政府ニ於テ連ニ適當ナル  
 措置ヲ執リタルヲトハ余ク帝國政府カ英國並ニ其他第三國ノ棉倉ヲ保障  
 ヤントスルノ誠意ニ出テタルモノナルヲトハ閣下ニ於テ篤ト御諒承相成  
 ルヲト信スルモノナリ。

DMF DOC / 170

C E R T I F I C A T E

Statement of Source and Authenticity

I, ODO, Nagaharu, Assistant Chief of the Archives Section,  
Japanese Foreign Office, hereby certify that the document hereto  
attached in Japanese consisting of 4 pages and entitled "State-  
ment of the Foreign Office regarding the Incident of Shelling  
the Ladybird and British Vessels, December,, 30, 1937" is an exact  
and true copy of an official document of the Japanese Foreign Office.

Certified at Tokyo,

on this 17th day of January, 1947.

(Signed) Nagaharu. ODO  
Signature of Official

Witness : (Signed) ... Ishida